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## *The Cause and Effect of Daydreaming*

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## Mythcon 51: The Mythic, the Fantastic, and the Alien

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### Abstract

In a typically large metropolitan area stood a typically large metropolitan insurance building that dwarfed the surrounding buildings to such an extent that the metropolitan area became famous due to the hugeness of one, single metropolitan structure.

### Additional Keywords

Fiction; The Cause and Effect of Daydreaming; Laurence Weiner

# THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF DAYDREAMING

by Laurence Weiner

In a typically large metropolitan area stood a typically large metropolitan insurance building that dwarfed the surrounding buildings to such an extent that the metropolitan area became famous due to the hugeness of one, single metropolitan structure. A person would assume that for a building to be so large, it must serve some incredible purpose. It didn't. Actually, the tiny eighteen story brownstone was the most important building. It was the First National Interstate Securities and Bonds Maritime State Bank; assets over nine hundred billion strong. The much taller building next to it dealt with life insurance. But I'm not about to compare the value of a buck to the value of a life.

On the eighty-eighth floor of the really huge building, in the absolute right end corner office was located a division of the auditing department. It was the smallest office in the entire building. Many suggested it was more of an architectural mistake rather than office space. Joe Smith occupied this space. Joe had been with the company nearly twenty-five years. He received his last promotion in December of seventy-two, getting literally kicked upstairs to the locale mentioned earlier.

Joe Smith did his job. If you asked him how he liked it, he would tell you there are a lot of people without jobs. He never married, so he had a nice apartment with nice things in it. He drove a nice car that was equipped with the latest in nice stereo equipment. Many speculated the reason Joe's life was so...nice, was because anybody with a name like "Joe Smith" just didn't go big game hunting or mountain climbing or even bicycle riding on a Sunday afternoon. Maybe this was the case in respect to Joe's exterior actions, however, his interior was alive and churning like a cat in a rinse cycle.



Joe was an avid follower of news

from all parts of the world. Everything concerned Joe Smith. From starvation to nuclear energy to crime, even faulty wiring, which causes approximately four hundred fire-related deaths annually. Imagine, every problem, every dilemma, every mishap, blunder, fault, act of nature/God, and even some of the good stuff - it was Joe Smith's problem. One would think that after "X" amount of years Joe Smith's nerves would be a bit frayed. People would say to him,

"Joe, lighten up, it's not your problem" or

"Joe, relax, let them worry about it" or

"That's life. Let's grab a brew."

Well, Joe Smith couldn't help but worry about these things. So it came as no surprise to himself that one day, a Thursday, Joe Smith found himself standing on the ledge outside his window, eighty-eight floors above his sprawling metropolis.

"Why go on?" he asked himself.

"Nobody wears a watch anymore."

He looked down on all the people below him who didn't even bother to notice a man standing on a ledge hundreds of feet in the air. Such insolence. So without any dramatic farewell-cruel-world speeches or noble gesturing, Joe Smith walked off the ledge.

Now it wasn't as if he swan dived or contorted like a man plunging to his death. No, he simply walked off the ledge like it spanned miles of air. As he was falling, Joe was fairly calm. He fell at a pretty decent velocity, his mind trying to figure out that formula for weight and height and distance and all that stuff. His breathing felt a bit labored as he scanned the ever-blurring landscape that grew larger by the second. He stretched out his arms because he didn't really know what to do with them. I mean, just what does a person do with his hands while hurdling toward concrete and

people? Put them in his pockets? Maybe in back of his head as if he were in a LAY-Z BOY chair? So he stuck them out like those guys did who jumped out of airplanes or did those high dives off of cliffs.

All was going well. Joe felt this of all ways was a rather interesting way to go. He was surprised at the amount of quality thinking a person can do in a state of suspension. He wondered if remarkable things like a cure for cancer or a new system of irrigation had been thought about and solved by people who jumped off buildings. He laughed at the fact that, if this was indeed the case, we'd never know.

At about fifty feet from ground zero, something rather out of the ordinary took place. Joe Smith sprouted wings. Mind you, not just any old pair of wings, but really big gold ones. It immediately reminded him of the same wings that lady wore on the hood of a Rolls. The wings reflected the sunlight into a very bright color spectrum that shined on the buildings surrounding him. As if he'd been born with wings, Joe began to flap them and was soon flying around the sky with this cocky look that suggested only a fool wouldn't know what to do.

At first he just generally buzzed around for a bit, checking out the equipment. But as all people do when they get a new toy, he started to test its limitations. He soared up high, stalled, then swooped downward, pulling out of it just before crashing through the roof of a checkered cab. Needless to say, Joe attracted spectators. All motion ceased below him as people poured out onto the streets to get a look at this new species of bird named "Joe."

Joe was having himself a good time with his wings, until he noticed that there were a few people around him also with wings. At first he was jealous, then defensive, then overjoyed at the notion of others doing the same as he. Soon the entire city was empty as the inhabitants took to the sky, flapping and gliding and soaring about. The reactions of the people varied as some laughed hysterically while others cried. Joe noticed his wings were one of a kind.

The others had grey wings with a considerably shorter span, yet just as effective. He surveyed the situation and compared it to that of a scene out of one of those movies where everyone went to the country fair to mingle with all their good friends and neighbors.

He climbed up in the sky, giving himself the feeling that he never wanted to stop. But he did, cursing himself for letting his fear of the unknown get in the way of this unusual event.

Joe looked at the people, who in turn were looking at him. He realized that he was the center of attention and became very nervous as if he'd just broken wind during a moment of silence among a crowd of millions. His panic subsided long enough to let the feeling of total control overtake him. He had an incredible urge to make some kind of speech or declaration in honor of what was taking place. So he did.

"Today is a really great day!" he proclaimed.

A cheer swelled among the crowd. Joe smiled and shivered at the idea of being in the spotlight. He thought of going on with a joke, but ruled against it when he realized that he wasn't a funny kind of guy. Instead, pictures of Martin Luther King and JFK flowed through his brain, telling him that he should choose his words carefully and maybe inject a little meaning if at all possible.

"Today...we have stumbled upon a new beginning" he said pausing for dramatic effect.

"These wings are for us, symbols. Symbols that serve as a guide to us all, that together, united in our new-found lives, we can fly away from our hatred, our anger and prejudice, our pain and contempt...toward a better, more understanding way of life in which all of us will bond together, on this glorious green earth, and! our spacious blue skies!"

The cheering lasted nearly five minutes as the crowd broke into a frenzy of acrobatic air maneuvers. Joe watched with a feeling of pride. For the first time in his life he felt as if he had accomplished something that would leave a mark somewhere on time. For once he didn't feel as if his life was being pulled



out from under him, causing him to feel unsatisfied as most people do when they wake up with the realization that a great deal of time has been wasted on nothing at all.

The people grew calm, hoping to hear more words of inspiration and comfort from their newly self-appointed messiah. Joe sensed this and prepared himself for his next sermon by combing back strands of his hair with his sweaty palms. He cleared his throat, but somebody else spoke.

"Where we gonna fly to?" the voice asked.

Joe looked around him, but nobody seemed to match the voice. He straightened his vest and raised his finger in the air.

"Well, where we goin'?" the voice asked again.

The crowd began to hum with questions about who was being so rude as to interrupt the resident god. A very skinny woman wearing a red dress pointed down at the ground below them.

"Who's that down there?" she asked loudly.

She was referring to the little boy down in the middle of the street. He looked to be around nine years old, wearing a blue t-shirt with a picture of "PETEY", the dog from "The Little Rascals" splashed on the front. He was sitting in a little red fire engine that ran on peddle power. On the side of the engine was a white plastic ladder and a white bucket with the word "FIRE" printed in bold letters. A little silver bell stood out on the edge of the hood.

Joe looked at the boy, wondering to himself why he didn't have any wings like the other children.

"Why don't you grow your wings and join us?" Joe said.

"Where we goin'?" the boy asked again.

"We're going to a new place that will be better than this one!"

"Where's that?"

"Far away!"

"How far?"

"Real far!"

"Where?"

Joe was losing his mind, so he thought. He pretended to lose his hearing as well.

"I'm sorry son. I'm having a tough time hearing you. Why don't you come



on up so we can talk."

The boy nodded his head in disgust, then climbed out of his fire engine and moved over to the sidewalk. He looked up at Joe for a moment, then cupping his hands around his mouth he shouted at Joe.

"I said where are we going!"

Joe was amazed at the boy's tenaciousness. He was also amazed at the fact that he didn't swoop down and give the little snot nosed punk a slap for ruining his day.

"Look, we're going to fly away from here. Now you either sprout wings and join us...or we'll leave you behind."

Joe looked around for support, but found none. All eyes were fixed on the defiant little boy.

"Is it around here?" the boy asked.

"Just around the corner."

"Where?"

"I got it right here!" Joe snapped raising his fist. He caught himself mid-sentence and began to laugh. He was wasting time with this child. If he wants to ask so many questions, he'll just have to follow along to get the answers. So he thought.

"We're going now," Joe said.

"Anywhere you go it's gonna be the same thing. Might as well stay," the boy said matter of factly.

A small bubble traveled up the back of Joe's neck. It exploded in his forehead. The boy had said something

that had totally caught Joe off guard. He was absolutely paralyzed with fear at the notion he had overlooked something that was incredibly important.

"Come on now...be a, be a good boy, and...sprout your wings." He was losing it. He was losing it and there was not one single thing he could do about it. The crowd began to murmur as Joe's mind raced with a million thoughts as what to say next. He motioned with his wings to the crowd.

"Let's go find the promised land," he said.

"Let's go live in the new Jerusalem."

The crowd was reluctant. Only a few moved in his direction.

"I'll stay here. You go ahead without me," the boy shouted.

"Where is this boy's mother?" Joe asked gasping for air to hold back the tears.

"She ain't here. She's in New Mexico," the boy replied.

"Don't you want to be like the rest of us?" Joe pleaded. "It wouldn't look good for you. People would talk."

To a nine year old boy slanderous remarks had about the same effect as a bad credit rating.

"You're just trying to be a big shot, thats all."

Joe felt a sudden urgent desire to win the boy over.

"C'mon, we'll go together. You can fly next to me!"

The boy shuffled his feet trying to make sense of Joe's turn around. To Joe, this was it. Either get the kid to follow along, or face whats been nagging him at the far corners of his tired and confused mind.

"Well, whaddya say?" Joe asked softly.

"I don't wanna play follow the leader."

"Who said anything about playing follow the leader?"

The nagging at the back of his mind began its move to the front. "It's what you're doing ain't it?"

"No...I mean, not really..."

The nagging was now at the front and center of Joe's mind. It was a tiny, squeaky little voice in his head that kept repeating the same thing over and over and over,

"Stop joining clubs."

Joe shook his head hoping to jar the voice loose. It didn't work.

"I just don't want wings like everybody else" the boy almost pleaded.

"Whats wrong with wings?" Joe asked.

"I don't want any, thats all." Joe wasn't satisfied.

"Look, we all have wings, and we like them just fine."

"How do you know, did you ask everybody?"

"I don't need to, you can see we all have them!"

"So?"

"So" Joe thought. Combined with "Stop joining clubs" and now "So", Joe's head was pretty noisy. Not that it's never been noisy before; it was just starting to sound all too familiar to him. If it wasn't the Boy Scouts it was baseball. From baseball to drinking beer to cutting his hair, and now to growing wings. His anger returned.

"There's something wrong with you not wanting to sprout wings and fly like the rest of us!" Joe snapped.

"God wouldn't like you to fly like the birds do" the boy blurted out.

"God?" thought Joe, "What does a nine year old boy know about God?"

"How do you know this?" Joe asked.

"Just do" the boy answered.

"Yes, but how do you just...do?"

"Well. If God had wanted me to fly, he woulda gave me wings when I was born."

"Yes, but God gave us wings now. So now we fly!"

Joe's heart was just about out of his throat and in his mouth.

"How do you know God gave you those wings?" the boy snapped.

"Who else would?" Joe snapped back.

"Maybe you made them up in your head. Maybe they ain't really there... 'maginary."

Joe Smith was never one for deep theological thinking. Yes, he was concerned with the world and all of that, but God was God and what's under the tree this year.

"Nonsense!" was all Joe could answer with.

But the crowd didn't think like Joe, at least not all of them. Talking began, which of course led to debate, which of course led to argumentation, which naturally ended up with yelling. Words like "Fake" and "Imagination" filled the air. Joe looked around feeling as hopeless as the captain of the Titanic. The

Titanic was a disaster that really bothered Joe.

"I think it's all fake!" the boy yelled.

"All fake, just like in the movies," he said as he climbed into his fire engine. Joe hung in the sky watching the boy start to peddle his fire engine down the street, making engine noises with his vibrating lips.

Joe turned to the sky.

"I was so close," he whispered. He had hoped for an answer, but none came. He didn't notice that while he

was looking to the clouds for reassurance, his body began to float down to the ground, along with the countless others. He landed smoothly on his ledge and stepped back inside his tiny office.

"Fake" he said out loud as he plopped down in his chair behind his desk. He lifted his arms, checking under them. Nothing but hair and sweat. Then, softly, quietly, he lay his head down on his desk and wept like a child.

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THE RAMPANT GUINEA PIG #8 just came out and RPG #9 is due out October 1989. Available from Mary Ann at 20500 Enadia Way, Canoga Park, CA 91306.

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CHRISTINE LOWENTROUT, last but far from least:

A List of Sherwood Smith Sales -- Apr. 1989:

"Monster Mash," short story, sold to hardcover anthology WEREWOLVES, Harper & Row, appeared Summer of 1988, edited by Jane Yolen and Martin Greenberg

WREN TO THE RESCUE, a YA fantasy novel, sold to HJB, Jane Yolen Books, to appear in hardcover Fall 1990.

"Ghost Dancers," a short short, in the anthology THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT, edited by Jane Yolen and Martin Greenberg. Harper and Row hardcover, to appear summer of 1989.

REBEL FROM ALPHORION, a teen sf novel, Number Three in a series called PLANET BUILDERS published under the name Robyn Tallis. Packaged by Cloverdale Press, for Ballantine Ivy, appeared Feb. 1989.

VISIONS FROM THE SEA, Planet Builders #4, published under the name Robyn Tallis. Packaged by Cloverdale Press for Ballantine Ivy. Appeared March '89.

THE GIANTS OF ELENNA, Planet Builders #9, under the name Robyn Tallis. Cloverdale Press for Ballantine Ivy. To appear August 1989.

FIRE FROM THE SKY, Planet Builders #10, under name Robyn Tallis, Cloverdale Press for Ballantine Ivy. To appear Sept. 1989.

THE BEGINNING, a contemporary teen novel, Number One in a series called NOWHERE HIGH. Published under the name Jesse Maguire; packaged by Cloverdale Press for Ballantine Ivy. To appear Dec. 1989.

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